Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle WA 98101

Alaska
Idaho
Oregon
Washington

EPA FACT SHEET

August 1999

BLACKBIRD MINE - PANTHER CREEK OVERBANK DEPOSITS

Cobalt, Idaho

PUBLIC COMMENTS INVITED

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) invites your comments during a 30 day public comment period on cleanup alternatives for contaminated overbank areas along Panther Creek. The alternatives were evaluated to reduce potential risk to human health and the environment from contaminated soil along Panther Creek.

This fact sheet gives a summary of the cleanup alternatives evaluated, as well as the proposed alternative. The alternatives will be presented in a document called an Analysis of Alternatives (AOA).

Before making a final decision, EPA is asking for your comments on all of the alternatives. **The Public Comment Period runs from: August 30 to September 28, 1999. Written comments should be sent by September 28 to:**

Fran Allans
U. S. EPA
Idaho Operations Office
1435 North Orchard Street
Boise, ID 83706

The results of the investigations, risk assessment and alternatives analysis will be presented at the meeting. You will also have the opportunity to give us comments on the cleanup alternatives at that time.

COME TO A PUBLIC MEETING

September 1, 1999
USDA Forest Service, Cobalt Ranger District Office
on Panther Creek
6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Panther Creek Overbank Deposits Background

Blackbird Mine is an inactive mine approximately 20 miles west of Salmon, Idaho in the Salmon National Forest in east central Idaho, Lemhi County. Cobalt, gold, silver, and copper ore were extracted from underground and open pit mining operations. The mining operations left an open pit (Blacktail Pit), several miles of underground workings, waste rock piles and a tailings disposal impoundment.

The environmental concerns at the site are primarily caused by the release of metals into Meadow, Blackbird, Big Deer and Panther Creeks. Dissolved metals, such as cobalt, copper and iron, are released when snowmelt and rainwater seep through the mine wastes, producing acid rock drainage. Metals and arsenic can also be released to streams when mine wastes are eroded by storm or snowmelt events.

Contaminated soil, sediments and tailings from the Blackbird Mine were released from the site during high flows from large snowmelt and thunderstorm events. The contaminated material has been deposited along Panther Creek in the overbank soil as well as in pastures as a result of flood irrigation. Investigations have identified elevated concentrations of arsenic and other metals in several areas along Panther Creek. The highest concentrations of arsenic were found from the Cobalt Townsite down to Napias Creek. Arsenic concentrations generally decreased downstream of Napias Creek to the Salmon River.

In May of 1993, EPA proposed the site to be placed on its National Priorities List (NPL) for further investigation and possible cleanup under Superfund authority.

On November 18, 1994, EPA reached agreement with Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) to perform an investigation of contamination and evaluation of cleanup alternatives, known as a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study, and to evaluate cleanup alternatives for major source areas at the site as an early response action. On